

Iowa Joint Operator Certification and Training Coordination Committee

Friday, July 20, 2007 – IAMU Office, Ankeny, Iowa

Meeting Minutes

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

The meeting was called to order by Chair Jon Martens at 10:05 a.m.

Present were:

- Dale Barrie, IRWA	- Steve Mrstik, KCC
- Alan Borden, IAWWA	- Harris Seidel, IWPCA
- Frank DeMilia, NWICC/KCC	- Laurie Sharp, IDNR
- Jane Enfield, IDNR	- Jill Soenen, IAMU
- Dennis Hayworth, DMACC/KCC	- Jim Stricker, IWPCA
- Steve Jones, ISU	- Jim Utter, IWPCA
- Jon Martens, IAWWA	- Mike Wildung, IRWA
- Jim McElvogue, IWPCA	

Visitors: Dan Olson, IDNR
John Veach, IRWA
Mark Ward, Iowa Lakes Regional Water

2. Adoption of Agenda

Moved by Jim Utter, seconded by Steve Mrstik, to adopt the agenda as distributed by e-mail a week earlier. Motion carried.

[NOTE: An agenda can be obtained from any Joint Committee member within the three days preceding a meeting of the Joint Committee.]

3. Approval of May 18, 2007 Minutes

Moved by Jim McElvogue, seconded by Alan Borden, to approve the minutes as distributed. Motion carried.

4. Public Comment

None.

5. Unfinished Business/Assignments

a. Backhoe Operator Training

At the May 18 meeting, Jill Soenen requested approval for CEU credit for training on backhoe operation. IAMU may present a hands-on workshop here at the IAMU campus.

“Backhoe Operator” is an approved Safety topic in our Guidance Lists for all classes except WT. However, it does not appear in the approved lists for operator training. “Heavy Equipment Operator” is listed in the need-to-know (NTK), but many NTK topics are not in the Guidance Lists.

There was an extended discussion pro and con. Eventually, the point was made that we should evaluate this (or any other) topic in terms of its relevance before making a decision. Chapter 81 requires that CEUs “must be directed related. . . .” Our Guidance Lists were developed by consensus on which topics were relevant and which were not.

What does relevance mean? The ABC workshop in Chicago last September (in which Laurie participated) developed definitions for both water and wastewater, combined for the present purpose as follows:

“Relevant w/ww continuing education training must be on topics that are essential to the operation and maintenance of w/ww facilities/systems and influence drinking water quality, water supply, and/or public health and the environment for the operator certificate(s) to which the training is applied.”

By consensus, a decision on approval was deferred until the September meeting.

b. Operator by Affidavit

The guidance document distributed in March has been reviewed by the Field Offices and will be submitted to the Water Supply Operations Supervisor for approval.

c. Grade A Training Scope

No action will be taken on this until next year.

d. Facilities Classification

Jim Utter reported that the proposed wastewater treatment plant point rating system (Iowa Plan) was distributed at the IWPCA Annual Conference in June. Comments were requested, but none were received.

John Veach, wastewater circuit rider for IRWA in southwest Iowa, expressed concern about the effect the proposed point ratings would have on the smaller cities with mechanical treatment plants in his area. Several would go from Grade II to Grade III; their operators are currently certified Grade II, but it would be very difficult for them to advance to Grade III. Specific elements mentioned by John were points for lift stations, biosolids application, and laboratory. Besides that, the addition of disinfection will add another five to ten points.

Dale Barrie, water systems circuit rider for IRWA stated that he had not seen similar problems in water. In his review of the point ratings, some Grade III plants would go up to Grade IV; but they already have Grade IV superintendents.

If the point rating system is adopted, what is the anticipated time frame? It would take at least three to four years for Field Office staff to complete the ratings as part of their normal facility inspections.

Is grandfathering an option for operators in these situations? No, this is no longer permitted. Chapter 81.12 Rules do provide the option of a waiver for the DRC operator when the facility grade has been increased. Upon passing the exam for the new grade, although lacking the required education, the operator may remain in that position but will be certified only for that facility.

The Joint Committee thanked Veach for taking the time to attend and provide helpful input.

e. Issuing Agency Agreements

Laurie Sharp and others noted that the June 15 Symposium on training and IAAs was very successful. Almost all the players were represented. There was a good exchange of information and ideas in an atmosphere of cooperation and congeniality.

It was indicated that IAWWA will again become an Issuing Agency. There has been no word from IWPCA.

6. New Business

a. Unsewered (and Undersewered) Communities Program

Dan Olson, IDNR staff person in charge of this program, described some of the challenges and approaches of the program. Iowa has 150 incorporated communities and 550 unincorporated communities which are unsewered or undersewered. Typically, wastewater goes to individual septic tanks from which the effluent goes to drainage tiles within the community and subsequently to a surface

stream which may also be within the community. Treatment options include step systems, peat filters, textile filters, effluent grinders, recirculating sand filters, and two-cell lagoons.

The most critical problems are creating a management entity of some kind, organizing funding and assuring maintenance of the system. An unincorporated community cannot obtain grants.

Iowa has an On-site Wastewater Association of over 1,000 members. DMACC has begun to provide training in this area. Discussions have begun on certification for designers, installers, inspectors, and operators of on-site systems. Some of our neighboring states already have certification programs in this area. The technology is enough different so that our present WWT operator certification would not relate to on-site treatment and vice versa. Presumably, a new certification classification is needed.

The Joint Committee thanked Olson for this overview of a different world. His contact information is telephone 515-725-0346 and e-mail is daniel.olson@DNR.state.ia.us.

b. On-line Training – Laurie Sharp

This topic was deferred until the September meeting.

c. WARN – Jon Martens

On July 11, Jon Martens, Shelli Grapp, Ricky Mach, and John Veach attended an AWWA workshop in Denver on Mutual Aid Response Networks for water and wastewater utilities.

7. Representative Comments

a. IDNR

The certification program lost a friend and valuable resource in the untimely death of Mike Wiemann on July 8. Mike was the lead certification staff person from mid-2000 through January 2003 and continued to manage the database since then.

On July 27, Shelli Grapp will begin her new position as Water Supply Operations Section Supervisor following Steve Hopkins. Shelli was Administrative Affairs Manager for John North at the Cedar Rapids Water Department. Previously, she had been an Environmental Specialist with the Region 1 Field Office of IDNR.

Laurie Sharp announced that renewals are 88 percent complete, far better than ever before at this time. This may actually be much closer to 100 percent completion since many may not be renewing.

The on-line calendar previously maintained by IAMU is being taken over by IDNR and should be active again within six weeks.

b. IAMU

Jill Soenen reported that IAMU is planning fall workshops for which the dates have not yet been set.

c. IAWWA

Jon Martens noted that the Joint Fall Short Course for water and wastewater operators will again be held September 11 & 12 at the Sheraton West Des Moines Hotel.

d. IRWA

Mike Wildung announced that Dale Barrie, IRWA's water utility circuit rider for southwest Iowa, has been formally appointed to the Joint Committee replacing Brad Robbins.

Mueller Products will be presenting training under the sponsorship of IRWA. Flyers have just recently been mailed out to selected areas. Locations will be Sioux City, Waterloo, Bettendorf, and Altoona. IRWA has received the appropriate paperwork needed to issue CEUs.

e. ISU

Steve Jones is currently working on completing several stormwater projects.

f. IWPCA

Jim Utter also noted the Fall Short Course.

g. KCC

Steve Mrstik thanked Jim Stricker, Jim Utter, and Laurie Sharp for their participation in KCC's Water Conference at Ankeny July 9 & 10. The Bob Black Wastewater Conference will be held on the KCC campus August 13 & 14.

Frank DeMilia and Dennis Hayworth announced that plans for Small Water Systems training for this fall are under way. Grade A training will be included. Places and dates are pending, and flyers will be mailed out soon.

8. Assignments

Staff – Report on CEUs earned

9. Next Meeting

Friday, September 21, 2007, 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. at the IAMU office in Ankeny.

10. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by Jim McElvogue; seconded by Steve Jones; motion carried. The Joint Committee adjourned at 12:05 p.m.

Harris Seidel, Secretary